

Agrarian Elites and Public Action. The Alentejo between 1800 and 1930*

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Introduction

This study examines the public action of the Alentejo agrarian elites between 1800 and 1930. It was born out of two individual pieces of research on Montemor-o-Novo in the first half of the 19th century¹ and Évora at the end of the 1st Republic². Although there are differences between these two districts (*concelhos*), the fact that they are situated in a predominantly agrarian milieu and that they are geographically adjacent led us to develop a joint project with a view to comparing the social profile of the agrarian elite and attempting to understand its strategies for assertion in public life.

Wide ranges of sources were used. For Montemor, important sources were: town council minutes, lists of candidates and people eligible for election, electoral censuses, records of minutes of elections, books detailing the introduction of the tithe (*décima*), and the minutes, reports and correspondence in the Civil Governor's Office Unit of the Évora County (*Distrito*) Archives. For Évora, the following sources were used: city council minutes, correspondence between the council and central and local administration, electoral census records, election documents, electoral and administrative legislation and the local and national press.

The principal methodology used was prosopography.

* This article was written as part of a research project entitled "Portuguese Elites in Regional Contexts: Family, Patrimony and Interest Networks in the Contemporary Alentejo" funded by the JNICT/ FCT (Project PCSH/C/HIS/1002/95) and CIDEHUS.UÉ. An initial version was presented at Session C23: "Les élites agraires et le développement régional en Europe du Sud. Analyses comparatives (XIX-XX Siècles)", XII International Economic History Congress, Madrid, 1998.

¹ Cf., Paulo Silva Fernandes, *Elites e Finanças Municipais em Montemor-o-Novo. Do Antigo Regime à Regeneração*, Câmara Municipal de Montemor-o-Novo, 1999.

² Cf., Manuel Baiôa, *Elites políticas em Évora. Da I República à Ditadura Militar (1925-1926)*, Lisboa, Edições Cosmos, 2000.

The Intervention in Public life of Agrarian Elites in the 19th Century

The Montemor agrarian elite acted on the public stage principally as municipal officers, which is natural if we consider that councils were the most visible representation of power and the power mechanism closest to local people. At the same time, the exercise of the most important council offices, namely that of councillor, represented an advantage in terms of honour and prestige for those who held them³. It should therefore come as no surprise that in the first third of the 19th century town councils were monopolised by a set of individuals identified with the local landholding aristocracy. The legislation that governed municipal elections under the *Ancien Régime* also contributed greatly to this state of affairs in the sense that it excluded from the electoral process “good men and ordinary souls” and limited the choice of councillors to “noble men and lords of the land” or those who were descended from people who had already held such office⁴.

The aristocratic profile of Montemor Town Council is very similar to that of Évora City Council where, over a period of 232 years, from 1526 to 1831, the exercise of council office was confined to “noble people, of the principal or first nobility of the city, sons and grandsons of councillors”⁵. In Montemor-o-Novo councils were also monopolised by the local nobility, but in general this was not a feature of the final period of the *Ancien Régime*. Jorge Fonseca found that during the 17th and 18th centuries some surnames of councillors were repeated “sometimes forming long family chains”⁶, and these surnames continued to appear in the first third of the 19th century. This was indeed a true family monopoly. But it was not only this. Montemor councils

³ In fact, the office of councillor of Montemor-o-Novo conferred honour and prestige on whoever performed it, Montemor being a notable town which also boasted considerable economic resources; so aspiring to the office of councillor was all the more attractive (on the economic resources of Montemor-o-Novo Town Council see Maria Teresa Fonseca, *Relações de Poder no Antigo Regime. A Administração Municipal em Montemor-o-Novo (1777-1816)*, Câmara Municipal Montemor-o-Novo, 1995 and Paulo Silva Fernandes, *Elites e Finanças Municipais em Montemor-o-Novo. Do Antigo Regime à Regeneração* Câmara Municipal Montemor-o-Novo, 1999). In many smaller municipalities, however, the exercise of the office of councillor was seen more as a drain on expenses than an advantage in terms of honour and prestige. For this reason, in small municipalities the social profile of councils was substantially different, and local notables, where they existed, normally distanced themselves from these offices.

⁴ Cf., “Regimento para a eleição dos vereadores”, José Justino de Andrade e Silva, *Collecção Chronologica da Legislação Portuguesa, 1603-1612*, Lisbon, Imprensa de J.J. Andrade e Silva, 1854, pp. 314-316.

⁵ Maria Helena Cruz Coelho and Joaquim Romero Magalhães, *O Poder Concelhio: das Origens às Cortes Constituintes*, Coimbra, published by Centro de Estudos e Formação Autárquica, 1986.

⁶ Jorge Fonseca, “Uma Vila Alentejana no Antigo Regime: Aspectos Sócio-económicos de Montemor-o-Novo nos Séculos XVII e XVIII”, *Almansor*, 4, Montemor-o-Novo, 1986, p. 199.

also assumed the character of a dynasty in the way in which the offices were transferred from generation to generation.

This long period of control by some families of the municipality suggests that this was a cohesive group which adopted a set of strategies for endogamy with a view to the preservation of power and a certain type of family heritage, constituted not only by a range of material goods but also by accumulated social prestige. In fact, the path of continuity which exists between councillors who held office in the 17th and 18th centuries and those who held office in the 19th century is demonstrative of the way in which the local landholding aristocracy barred access to new individuals, and only allowed renewal, limiting access “almost exclusively to children and other relatives”⁷.

Meanwhile, the public intervention of the Montemor agrarian elite was not restricted to the holding of the most prestigious council offices. The principal offices of the Ordinances, that of grand-captain and grand-sergeant, were also monopolised by members of this elite, and only the less important offices of the district military hierarchy were left for individuals of lower social status. The control of the Ordinances⁸ was the means by which the “lords of the land” increased their dominion over the common people by means of the power which they wielded by recruiting people for military service or enabling family members and friends to avoid it, and, simultaneously, imposing on disadvantaged groups all types of arbitrary decisions⁹.

Neither did the *Misericórdia* charitable institution escape the control of the Montemor agrarian elite; the office of chairman was held by those enjoying high social rank whose wealth was based on the ownership of the land.

We can thus state that, in the first third of the 19th century, the Montemor agrarian elite controlled the principal local institutions, a fact which is demonstrative of its enormous social power based on the ownership of the land and family pre-eminence, the latter resulting from a material heritage based principally on rural property.

The Liberal Revolution introduced profound changes in the mechanisms of access to power with new criteria for social assessment in which wealth and knowledge were to become more important than family tradition. The administrative reforms implemented between 1832 and 1834 had real practical effects on the social

⁷ Maria Teresa Fonseca, *Relações de Poder no Antigo Regime. A Administração Municipal em Montemor-o-Novo (1777-1816)*, Câmara Municipal de Montemor-o-Novo, 1995, pp. 42-43.

⁸ The Ordinances, instituted by King Dom Sebastião in response to national defence needs, were territorial divisions for militia recruitment and training posts.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 160.

composition of local governments. The first Montemor-o-Novo council elected after the triumph of Liberalism provides a good example of the effect of changes in the recruitment of councillors: of the five councillors elected only one belonged to the landholding aristocracy of the *Ancien Régime*; of the other four councillors one was a doctor and the other three belonged to the property-owning and business bourgeoisie of Montemor¹⁰.

The local aristocracy, of noble birth and property-owning, was thus losing its exclusivity of access to the principal municipal offices, and in the liberal period individuals from other social strata became councillors; they were from a range of professions: doctors, lawyers, apothecaries, businessmen, tailors and cobblers (see Table 1).

These alterations were only possible because of the change to the criteria of eligibility to municipal office. The criteria of nobility and the hereditary determining the choice of the local councillors during the *Ancien Régime* gave way to wealth and knowledge in the liberal period.

Meanwhile, the replacement of blood criteria by economic and knowledge criteria did not imply the total exclusion of the old ruling elite, at least in Montemor-o-Novo. Seven of the 44 councillors who held office from 1834 to 1851 had also served as councillors during the *Ancien Régime*. At the same time, it should be added that 38 of them were landowners, although 17 were landowners and at the same time farmers, businessmen, lawyers, surgeons, tobacconists, tailors or registrars.

Neither in the district of Évora was there a total break with the past; from 1834, a significant proportion - around 40% - of the Évora municipal elite of the *Ancien Régime* continued to be made up basically of “noble people, from the principal or prime nobility of the city”. This was a manifestation of the genealogical continuity of local elites, although there was some renewal by virtue of the fact that for access to the council the criteria of “quality”, in the words of Helder Adegar Fonseca, had been replaced by that of wealth¹¹.

This becomes clear, for both Montemor and Évora, if we consider that despite the fact that wealth was the basic criterion in the selection process of the controlling

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that already in 1822, at the time of the first liberal experience introduced by the Revolution of 1820, profound changes had already taken place in the social composition of Montemor Town Council, two members of the local nobility, a trader, an apothecary and a property-owner not belonging to the group of local notables having been elected.

¹¹ Helder Adegar Fonseca, “Sociedade e Elites Alentejanas no Século XIX”, *Economia e Sociologia*, 45/46, Évora, 1988, pp. 93.101.

elite, these two districts were located in a region in which greater or lesser access to land was the basic factor determining the social hierarchisation of individuals. This explains why when eligibility criteria became more stringent, that is, when the census limit for eligible citizens was raised, the percentage of property owners on councils increased considerably.

Table 1 – The Professions of Montemor-o-Novo Town Councillors (1816-1834 and 1834-1851)

Socio-professional categories	Councillors between 1816-1834	Councillors between 1834-1851
Property owners (oldest sons)	7	3
Property owners	8	18
Heirs to their parents' estates	1	
Property owner / Lawyer		1
Property owner / Farmer		1
Property owner / Businessman		5
Property owner / Trader / Farmer		4
Property owner / scrivener		1
Property owner / Tobacconist		1
Property owner / Surgeon		1
Property owner / Tailor		1
Doctor		2
Businessman		2
Apothecary		1
Haberdasher		1
Cobbler		1
Unknown		1
Total	16	44

Sources: Paulo Jorge da Silva Fernandes, *Elites e Finanças Municipais em Montemor-o-Novo, do Antigo regime à Regeneração*, MA Thesis, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon, 1999.

Thus we can conclude that the Montemor and Évora agrarian elites continued to participate actively in the political life of these districts. It is as well, however, to stress that the agrarian elite of the liberal period was not exactly the same as that of the *Ancien Régime*. It was an elite which asserted itself by virtue of its economic power, distinguishing itself in this way from the beginning of the 19th century; this was its only means of controlling access to power and thus intervening in the public sphere.

At the same time, as we approach the end of the century, the conditions were created for the appearance of new social protagonists. The expansion of education, the spread of reading, and the widening of the influence of the periodic press began to demand a high standard of education of those who sought to assert themselves publicly. In addition, the emergence of a plurality of institutions, among which were political parties, employers' organisations, the new solidarity institutions, and recreational circles and societies, generated new platforms for public assertion, both for the old local notables and for other individuals who sought social recognition in a more open, dynamic and plural society.

Agrarian Elites and Political Participation in the First Third of the 20th Century

With the coming of the 1st Republic (1910-1926) the number of people who could be considered as potential councillors increased substantially. The number of councillors on each municipal council rose and the legislation dating from the final years of the Monarchy which established the skills of reading and writing as a basic requirement for eligibility for administrative posts still held¹². This caused some alterations in the social composition of local elites.

Although the study of Évora political elites during the 1st Republic is still at the embryonic stage, we can state with confidence that the installation of the Republic wrought great changes in municipal elites. The appointment of councillors by central government, dominated by the Portuguese Republican Party (PRP) up until 1914, and the victory of the PRP in local elections up until the final stage of the 1st Republic, led to substantial alterations in the social composition of councils in the city of Évora. The republicans were always characterised by having the solid social support of individuals from the professions, lawyers and doctors, teachers, businessmen, factory-workers and, above all, civil servants. It is these socio-professional groups which came to dominate

¹² Cf., Article 268 of the Administrative Code of 1878; Article 7 of the Administrative Code of 1886; Article 8 of the Administrative Code of 1895; Carla Sofia Ângelo Faustino, *A Elite Política no Concelho de Arraiolos, (1890-1918)*, MA Thesis in Contemporary Social History, Lisbon, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, 1986, pp. 17-18; Manuel Baiôa, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

councils, in contrast to elites linked to aristocratic and agrarian circles associated with the Monarchy and monarchist parties, which were excluded from Local Power¹³.

Table 2 – The Professions of Évora City Councillors (1910-1927)

Socio-professional groups	1900-1910	1910-1920	1925/1926	1926/1927
I – Property Owners and Farmers	50 %	15 %	29 %	43 %
II – Rural Workers	2 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
III – Arts and Crafts	7 %	20 %	14 %	14 %
III – Shopkeepers	26 %	35 %	29 %	0 %
IV – Learned Professions	5 %	5 %	14 %	0 %
V – Civil Servants	7 %	25 %	14 %	43 %
VIII – Others	2 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Sources: 1910-1920 - Célia Silva; Cristina Patrício; Dulce Tavares; Marta Oliveira, *op. cit.*, Annexes 1, 2 and 3; 1925-1927 - Manuel Baiôa, *op. cit.*, Graphs XIII and XIV.

In the final stage of the Monarchy, between 1900 and 1910, 50% of Évora city councillors were property-owners or farmers, as compared with only 15% between 1910 and 1920¹⁴. This period was witness to the abandonment of councils by some of the monarchist families who were most influential in economic and social terms. Councils were made up principally of members of the PRP and other parties of the Republic. This scenario changed temporarily during the dictatorships of Pimenta de Castro and Sidónio Pais with the appointment of people linked to the traditional agrarian families of the city. In the final years of the Republic a coalition of conservative republican parties closer to agrarian interests took control of Évora City Council, and this had its effect on the social composition of councils. Following the last republican general elections held in 1925, 35% of the Municipal Senate of Évora and 29% of the city council Executive Committee was made up of councillors whose professions were linked to agrarian activities. The “28 May 1926 Movement”, extremely sensitive to the interests of property-owners and farmers, closely reflected the social composition of the first council from the Dictatorship period up until the final years of the Monarchy. The

¹³ Cf., Célia Silva; Cristina Patrício; Dulce Tavares; Marta Oliveira, *A elite política eborense no início do séc. XX*, Economic History Seminar, multi-copied, Évora, University of Évora, 1994/1995, Annex 1, 2 and 3. In Avis the Republic also brought a reduction in the proportion of agrarian figures on the town council, which fell from 62 % to 20 %. Meanwhile, later on during the time of the Republic, and principally during the time of the *New State* (1933-1974), the landholding elite recuperated some of the power it had lost (Cf., Maria Antónia F. Pires de Almeida, *Família e Poder no Alentejo, Elites de Avis - 1886-1941*, Lisbon, Edições Colibri, 1997, pp. 81-82 and 186-193). In Arraiolos, the *Republican Revolution* did not lead to the end of the majority presence of farmers and land-owners in the local political elite group. There was rather a greater acceptance of the presence of people from social strata traditionally marginalised during the Monarchy (Carla Sofia Ângelo Faustino, *op. cit.*, p. 86).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

Chairman of the Executive Committee nominated by the Military Dictatorship was the last Mayor of the Monarchy and 43% of the new councillors had links with agrarian circles¹⁵, as can be seen in Table 2.

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of various kinds of association, and various pressure groups were formed. The agricultural unions were born out of the need to protect farmers as agriculture developed. These were employers' organisations which looked after the interests of farmers and encouraged the modernisation of agriculture, ensured the sale of agricultural products, the acquisition of fertilisers, implements and machines, and stimulated the practice of insuring crops by negotiating advantageous conditions and premiums. Meanwhile, the agricultural unions also made the Évora agrarian elite more integrated and internally cohesive¹⁶.

In order to assess the degree of penetration of agrarian elites onto "platforms of power" we can examine to what degree Évora city councillors belonged to this union. In the final years of the Monarchy (1900-1910), 25% of councillors were members of the *Royal Union*. The Republic distanced itself from it during its early years. Up until the Dictatorship of Pimenta de Castro no Évora city councillor was a member of the agricultural union¹⁷. However, the dictatorship completely altered the relationship between the union and central and local government. Évora City Council Administrative Committee which was appointed (29-04-1915 to 16-05-1915) was made up of seven members of the union (78%) and two members of the army. Following this ephemeral approach by the union to political power, a new period was ushered in, in which the union was removed from political power and which was only ended by the dictatorship of Sidónio Pais. 33% of the councillors who sat on the two councils appointed during the dictatorship (17-01-1918 to 12-02-1919) were associated with the Union¹⁸. In the final years of the Republic, with the accession to municipal power of conservative republican councils, there was a kind of "normalisation" in relations between the union and the city council. 20% of councillors sitting on the last council of the 1st Republic were union members, including the head of the union. The Military Dictatorship

¹⁵ Cf., Évora County Archives, Évora City Council Minute Books, (1908-1927), nos. 802, 803, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818; Manuel Baiôa, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-64, 97-99, 141-149.

¹⁶ Cf., Helder Adegar Fonseca, *O Alentejo no século XIX. Economia e atitudes económicas*, Lisbon, INCM, 1996, pp. 420-422.

¹⁷ Cf., Célia Silva; Cristina Patrício; Dulce Tavares; Marta Oliveira, *op. cit.*, Annex 4 and Annex 4.1.

¹⁸ Cf., *Relatório da Direcção do Sindicato Agrícola de Évora com o parecer do concelho fiscal relativo à gerência do ano de 1914*, Évora, Tipografia de Notícias de Évora, 1915; Évora County Archives, Évora City Council Minute Books, (1914-1916), no. 815, Évora City Council Minute Books, (1916-1919), no. 816.

prolonged the link already which already existed between the union and the city council, and union members were eventually recruited regularly to become councillors¹⁹.

During the 1st Republic, a trend which had begun in the final years of the Monarchy continued, and the richest individuals were removed from councils. The widening of the recruitment base for councillors and the growing discrediting of political office due to the constant accusations of corruption by the press led to the removal of former notables from local political office. At the same time, these notables did not always have complete control over what was published in the press or said at meetings. The specific traditional patronage/dependency of highly ruralised societies was diluted, becoming a dependency of transition²⁰. In this period the “cacique property owner” started to compete with “new patrons and intermediaries – traders, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, etc. - who controlled and supplied certain specific resources, goods and services”²¹. Traditional patronage declined in importance in relation to state, administrative, local authority and professional patronage²². This new scenario favoured the emergence of a political elite with university training. Practically all Évora mayors were now university graduates or bachelors, mainly teachers, lawyers and doctors. Even in towns “cultural capital” came to play an essential role in the recruitment of the local political elite²³.

Meanwhile, the traditional agrarian elites continued to frequent other publicly visible platforms.

Public Visibility and Associations

Although the nature of the political participation of agrarian elites changed in some respects between the 19th and the 20th centuries, in other ways continuity was almost always the rule. On the basis of what is admittedly a still very superficial analysis, it is still clear that the degree of cohesion of this elite persisted by means of marriages among the notables of the region and by means of integratory sociability. The

¹⁹ Cf., Manuel Baiôa, *op. cit.* pp. 97-99, 141-149.

²⁰ Fernando Farelo Lopes, *Poder Político e Caciquismo na 1.ª República Portuguesa*, Lisbon, Estampa, 1994, p. 17; João Manuel Gonçalves da Silva, “O Clientelismo partidário durante a I República: o caso do Partido Reconstituente (1920-1923)”, *Análise Social*, vol. XXXII, n.º 140, 1997, pp. 35-36.

²¹ João Manuel Gonçalves da Silva, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²² Cf., João Manuel Gonçalves da Silva, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-74; Manuel Baiôa, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

²³ Cf., Carla Sofia Ângelo Faustino, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83; Maria Antónia F. Pires de Almeida, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-158 and 181-193.

agrarian elites that we find in the 1st Republic possess a degree of genealogical continuity in relation to the elites of the second half of the 19th century²⁴.

In Évora the sociability of monarchist families linked to agrarian circles continued to take place in the *Évora Circle*²⁵ on an increasingly restricted, intimate and closed platform²⁶, which was distinguished from republican clubs, whose doings were widely reported in the press, which made them more open and permeable platforms²⁷.

Other platforms for distinction were relief institutions. Economic elites always sought to lead these bodies as a way of dominating the privilege of doing good, thus obtaining merit and distinction. The *Misericórdia* charitable institution almost always provided them with a means for doing this. Throughout nearly the whole of the period covered by 1st Republic this institution came to provide the stage for a power struggle between the various patrons who were gradually emerging. Political parties would put forward lists of candidates, seeking to dominate one of the most important centres of power in cities. The election of the *Misericórdia* chairman and the board of directors became almost as important as that of councillors²⁸. In a similar way to that which has been noted for the city council, the traditional social and economic elite of Évora “withdrew” from the struggle for the dominion of this institution. At the same time, the lack of resources that the *Misericórdia* experienced from time to time led to inertia and a loss of prestige. At the end of the Republic it is already difficult to find individuals who were prepared to take on the role of chairman of the *Misericórdia*. Some members of the administrative committee appointed to the Évora *Misericórdia* in 1926 stayed away from the inauguration ceremony for committee members. B. Carujo, in *Notícias de Évora*, commented on this attitude, and pointed to a lack of money for administration as justifying it. He went on to state that “formerly everyone wanted to be a board

²⁴ Cf., Helder Adegar Fonseca, *O Alentejo no século XIX.*, op. cit., pp. 185-225, Tables IV to XXI; Helder Adegar Fonseca, “As elites económicas alentejanas, 1850-1870: anatomia social e empresarial”, *Análise Social*, Vol. XXXI, no. 136-137, 1996, pp. 711-748; Manuel Baiôa, op. cit. pp. 61-63, 79-81, 85-89, 94-96; Carla Sofia Ângelo Faustino, op. cit., pp. 87-91; Maria Antónia F. Pires de Almeida, op. cit., pp. 124-129; José Cutileiro, *Ricos e Pobres no Alentejo (uma sociedade rural portuguesa)*, Lisbon, Sá da Costa Editora, 1977, pp. 121-178.

²⁵ On the *Évora Circle* during the Monarchy see: Maria Ana Rodrigues Bernardo, *Sociabilidade e Práticas de Distinção em Évora na Segunda metade do século XIX. O Círculo Eborense*, Multi-copied, University of Évora, Évora, 1992.

²⁶ News about this society was not normally reported in the local press during the 1st Republic.

²⁷ Cf., Manuel Baiôa, “Sociabilidade Política no final da I República em Évora. O Centro Republicano Nacionalista Eborense” *Maia, História Regional e Local*, Congress Minutes, Vol. III, Maia, Maia City Council, 1999, pp. 85-101.

²⁸ Cf., José Manuel Sobral, “Religião, relações sociais e poder - a Misericórdia de F. no seu espaço social e religioso (séculos XIX e XX)” *Análise Social*, Vol. XXV, no. 107, pp. 351-373; João Manuel Gonçalves da Silva, op. cit., pp. 31-74; Manuel Baiôa, *Elites Políticas em Évora ...*, op. cit., p. 149.

member of the *Misericórdia*, and the brotherhood would openly contest seats at election times, but nowadays precisely the opposite happens: everyone refuses to serve, because (referring to a Portuguese proverb) in a *house with no bread, everyone fights and no-one is right*²⁹.

Agrarian elites distanced themselves from the struggle within the *Misericórdia* and created their own relief institutions. In Évora, The Children's Asylum was set up for disabled children, along with the Ramalho Barahona Mendicants' Asylum, the Crèche and Dairy and the Poor Allowance at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. These institutions were led by the economic elite of the city, and some of them administered by the wives of the notables of Évora³⁰.

Another way in which the presence of the elites was perpetuated in the social space and the local imagination was the public demonstration of their material wealth, which could be expressed by lifestyle, the habit of sea bathing and frequenting spas, or by the way in which they buried their dead. Agrarian elites continued to enjoy a great deal of public visibility in all these fields, while they progressively shared them with people who came from other social milieus³¹.

Conclusion

The study of the *Alentejo* agrarian elite throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century enables us to detect strands of continuity and change with regard to the importance of its intervention in public life.

An immediate gradual decrease is evident in the proportion of members of the elite serving on the local councils we examined, although the process is not linear, and there were times when the elite was an extremely important power, and other occasions when it almost disappeared from the local political scene. Meanwhile, the loss of importance by the agrarians on local councils was less notable in rural than in urban areas according to some studies which have been carried out, which also reveal that at times of great national political change, the degree of continuity was greater in small

²⁹ B. Carujo, "Progresso de ... «carangueijo»", *Notícias de Évora*, 25 July 1926, p. 1.

³⁰ Cf., Manuel Baião, *Elites Políticas em Évora ...*, *op. cit.*, Tables 66 to 72.

³¹ Cf., Helder Adegar Fonseca, "As elites económicas ...", *op. cit.*, pp. 711-748; Maria Antónia de F. Pires de Almeida, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-196.

municipalities than in cities³². This is explained by the greater conservatism and greater resistance to change in rural areas, as well as the persistence of traditional patronage. At the same time, the absence in these circles of alternatives to the notables that controlled local political life should also be noted.

The triumph of the Liberalism in 1834 led to profound changes in the social fabric of the dominant political elite in the town of Montemor-o-Novo, as did the installation of the Republic in 1910 in the city of Évora. The administrative reforms introduced by Liberalism and by the Republic, and the political persecution which followed these times of great change, led to the formation of a new more socially differentiated council elite. From 1834 the political elite widened, although the agrarian land-owning classes continued to predominate. With the coming of the Republic there was, firstly, a great shake-up which led to the removal from municipal office of the agrarian elite, whose members had almost exclusively monarchist links. This elite was kept from power until the Dictatorship of Pimenta de Castro, when it returned in force, to be removed again with the end of the Dictatorship in May 1915. With the Sidónio dictatorship, the agrarian elite once again came to back into council office, circumstances which lasted until 1930, although it never managed to regain the importance that it had held during the Monarchy.

Throughout the period studied the number of people who could be considered as potential councillors gradually increased, and this obviously forced the agrarian elite to share its platform for public intervention with individuals associated with other economic activities and with very different social origins.

Thus we have an agrarian elite that at the beginning of the 19th century detained a monopoly as far as public action was concerned, but gradually, during the 19th and 20th centuries, other social groups achieved public visibility, managing to accede to certain bodies. In some cases, these new social groups were prepared to share power with the agrarian elites; in other cases, however, they temporarily removed them.

³² Cf., Rui Ramos, “O Estado Novo perante os poderes periféricos: o governo de Assis Gonçalves em Vila Real”, *Análise Social*, Vol.XXII, no. 90, 1986, pp.109-135; Carla Sofia Ângelo Faustino, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-87; Maria Antónia F. Pires de Almeida, *op. cit.* pp. 77-196; Manuel Baiôa, “Elites Políticas Locais Face ao «28 de Maio». O caso de Portalegre”, *IBN MÂRWAM*, Revista Cultural Concelho de Marvão, no. 7, Dezembro de 1997, pp. 205-217; Manuel Baiôa, *Elites Políticas em Évora ...*, *op. cit.* pp. 153-159.